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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to investigate (1) whether prior opinions concerning a child's sex influence the qualities attributed to the child; (2) whether differences exist in the responses of male and female raters; and (3) the effect of forced-choice responses vis-a-vis non-forced responses. An 8-minute videotape of a 22-month-old infant was shown to 464 medical, nursing, and psychology students. One third of the subjects were told that the child was female, one third were told the child was male, and one third were told the child was hermaphrodite (neutral). While viewing the videotape, one group of subjects scored the infant's activities as masculine or feminine (forced choice). Another group of subjects scored the infant's activities as masculine, feminine or neutral (non-forced choice). After viewing the videotape, all subjects rated the infant on eight descriptive variables: passive, active, dependent, self-confident, secure, adventurous, and normal. Results indicated that health professionals' attributions were affected by information concerning a child's sex. This effect was the same for male and female viewers in the forced-choice situation. In the non-forced-choice situation, females were more unwilling than males to accept the hermaphrodite status but were more likely to give neutral ratings when sex was stipulated. Ratings of descriptive variables also revealed stereotyped responses to sexual stipulation which differed for male and female viewers. (CB)

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Perceived Masculine-Feminine Behaviors of an Infant Among Health Professionals

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Research has suggested that parents begin sex typing and sex role socialization at birth (Rubin, Provezano, and Luria, 1974). Condry and Condry (1976) have noted that infants are perceived differently depending upon the sex attributed to the infant and the rater's sex and experience with children. More recently, gender labels have been found to influence adult interaction with children (Sidorowicz and Lunney, 1980). Such studies have cast strong doubt on the contention that it is the different behaviors of male and female infants that elicit differential behaviors and perceptions from adults.

The objectives of the present study were to investigate (a) whether prior opinions concerning a child's sex influence the qualities attributed to the child on questionnaires concerning sex role items, (b) whether there were differences between male and female responses and (c) the effect of forced choice responses vis-a-vis non-forced responses. It should be noted that the present study differed from previous studies in including not only a male and female specified child but also a hermaphrodite (or neutral) child and in further utilizing health professionals rather than parents or undergraduates as subjects.

Method:

A videotape of approximately eight minutes duration was shown to a group of 464 medical, nursing, and psychology students at various times and locations around the United States. The movie depicted a 22 month old infant engaged in various activities such as walking; sitting; and grasping, throwing, and retrieving small objects. At intervals of approximately 15 seconds a beep would sound, and the viewers were to score the most recent activity. There were 32 activities that were scored. Among the 464 total viewers 309 were asked to score each activity as being either masculine

or feminine in behavior. The other 155 viewers had these two choices plus a neutral category they could choose. Thus, one group had a forced-choice response, the other did not.

Prior to viewing the videotape, 174 of the 464 viewers were told that the child was a female, 151 were told the child was a male, and the remaining 139 were told the child was an hermaphrodite. The videotape was silent, and the child's physical appearance and dress was unisexual. It was impossible to deduce the child's sex from the child's dress or behavior.

The frequencies for sex of viewers, sex of child, and type response are given in Figure 1.

After viewing the videotape, each individual rated on a Likert-type scale eight descriptive variables: passive, active, dependent, self-confident, security, adventurous, normal. Additional dependent variables included a masculine vs. feminine rating and percent of 32 activities rated masculine, feminine, and neutral.

Results and Discussion:

Activity ratings: The results of activity ratings ANOVA for the forced choice group showed a significant effect of child's stipulated sex [$F(2,303) = 32.187$, $p < .001$]. This effect appeared to be the same for both male and female viewers. (See Tables 1 and 2).

For the non-forced choice group, a MANOVA on feminine and masculine percents across the three sex stipulations revealed while sex stipulation affected results, this effect is different for males and females. (See Tables 3 and 4). Further, analysis (t-tests) indicated that this differential effect was due to the greater usage of the neutral category by female viewers for all but the hermaphrodite stipulation.

Descriptive ratings: Two one-way MANOVA's were run on the eight

behavioral variables. Both the MANOVA for female [(16,506) = 4.27, $p < .0001$] and the MANOVA for males [(16,382) = 167, p < .051] revealed sex stipulation affected descriptive ratings.

The results of discriminant analysis (see centroids in Figure 2, Tables 5 and 6) indicate that stipulated sex has an effect on the ratings of the eight descriptive variables. Female and male viewers discriminate among the three stipulations in different ways. Note both sexes view the child stipulated to be hermaphrodite in a negative manner.

Female viewers tend to score female stipulations as feminine, self confident, and independent. They tend to score male stipulations as dependent not self confident and masculine. They tend to score hermaphrodite stipulations as being unadventurous, having a strong need for security and having abnormal behavior.

Male viewers tend to score female stipulations as feminine and adventurous; male stipulations as being masculine, and having abnormal behavior, and being unpassive. Males score hermaphrodite stipulations as having abnormal behavior, being passive, and unactive and not being self-confident.

Clearly, female and male viewers discriminate between the three sex stipulations in different ways.

Summary of Interpretation:

Health professionals' attributions are affected by information concerning a child's sex. This effect is the same for male and female viewers in a forced-choice situation. From results for the non-forced choice situation one could conclude that females relative to male viewers are unwilling to accept the hermaphrodite status and wish to see a sexual preference in the activities, but if sex is stipulated, female viewers are more likely to give neutral ratings. While descriptive ratings reveal stereotyped responses to sexual stipulation, the content of these stereotypes differs for male and female viewers.

Figure 1. Frequencies for Sex of Viewer, Stipulated Sex of Child, and Type Response

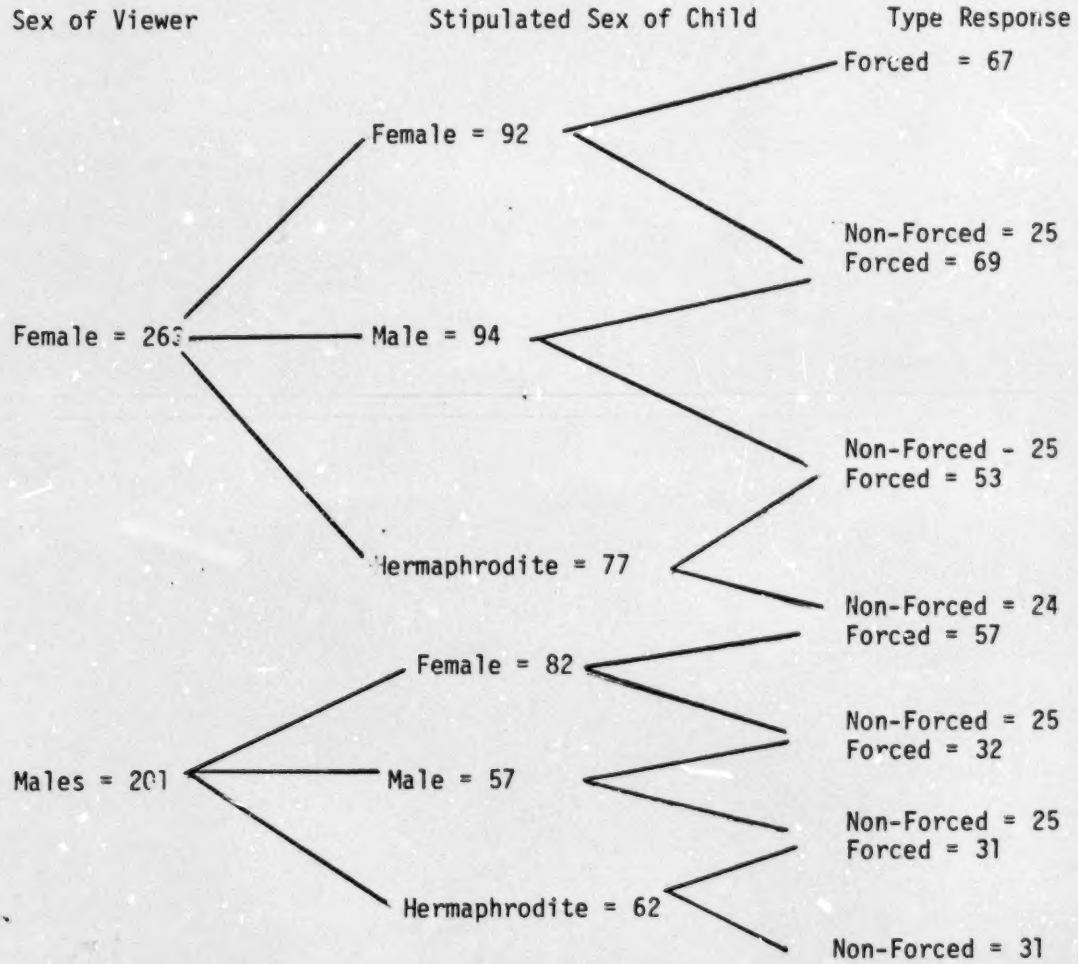


Table 1. Average Percentage of Activities Scored as Feminine and Masculine Among Forced-Scoring Sample for Males and Females.

	Child's Stipulated Sex		
Viewer's Sex	Female	Male	Hermaphrodite
Female	56.6F	42.9F	49.1F
	43.4M	57.1M	50.9M
Male	53.4F	39.4F	48.1F
	46.6M	60.6M	51.9M

Table 2. Two-Way ANOVA Results for the Feminine Percentages in the Forced-Scoring Sample

Source	DF	MS	F-Ratio	Prob.
Child's Stipualted Sex	2	0.521	32.187	< .001
Viewer's Sex	1	0.052	3.228	< .073
Interaction	2	0.004	0.247	< .782
Residual	303	0.016		

Table 3. Average Percentage of Activities Scored as Feminine, Masculine, and Neutral Among Non-Forced Choice Sample for Males and Females Separately.

Sex of Viewer	Child's Stipulated Sex		
	Female	Male	Hermaphrodite
Female	23.8F	20.1F	26.8F
	19.3M	31.3M	32.4M
	56.9N	48.6N	40.8N
Male	28.2F	22.8F	27.1F
	32.6M	36.8M	32.5M
	39.2N	40.3N	40.9N

Table 4. Two-way MANOVA Results for the Feminine and Masculine Percentages in the Non-Forced Scoring Sample.

Source	Wilks	Approx F	Hyp.D.F.	Error D.F.	Prob.
Child's Stip. Sex	0.833	7.056	4	296	0.000
Viewer's Sex	0.907	7.561	2	148	0.001
Interaction	0.931	2.675	4	296	0.032

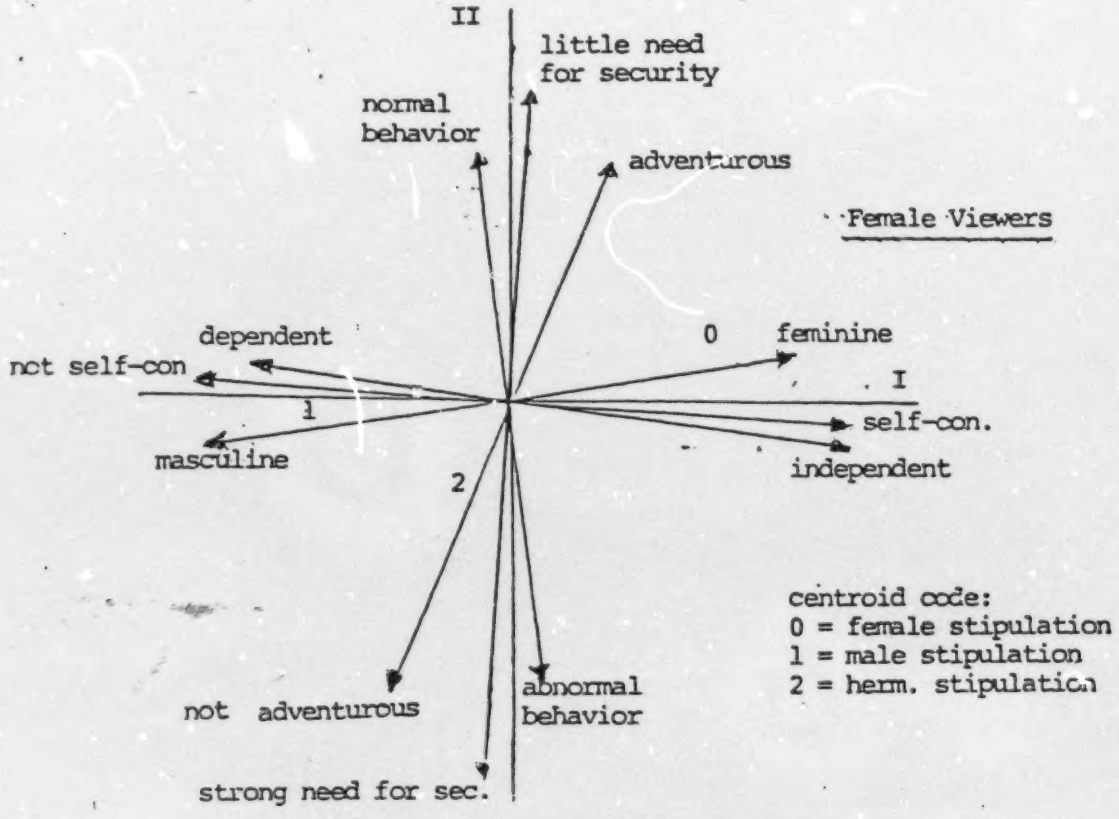
Table 5. Structure Correlations for the Two Discriminant Runs

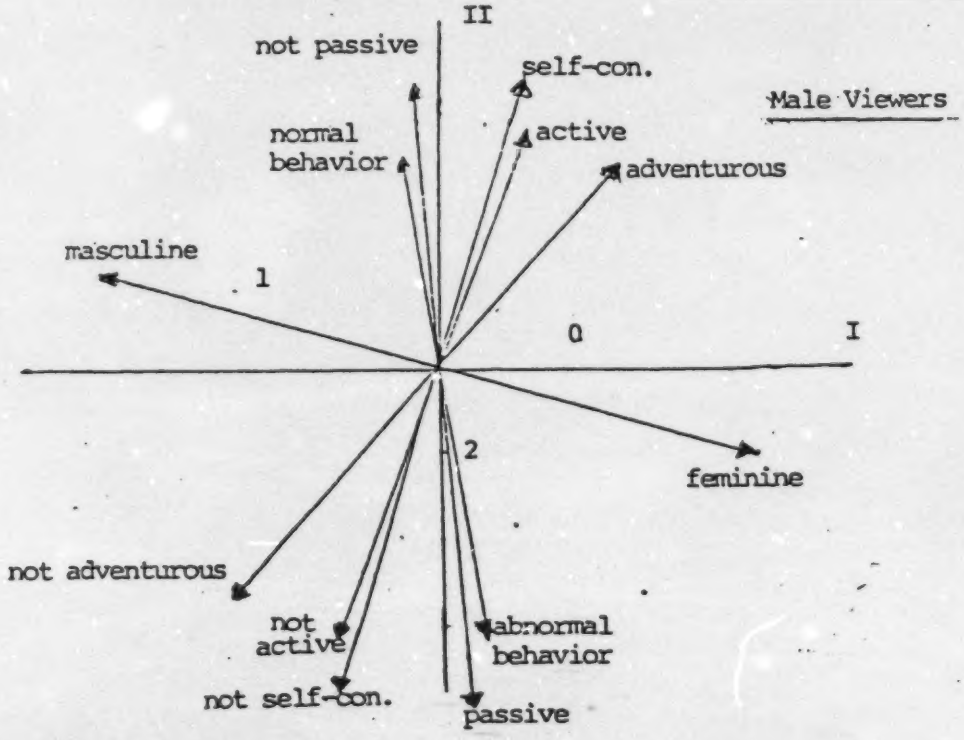
Variable	Female Viewers		Male Viewers	
	I	II	I	II
Passive	-0.18	0.27	0.01	-0.36
Active	0.20	-0.27	0.23	0.57
Dep/Ind	0.32	-0.09	-0.02	0.06
Self-Conf	0.38	-0.05	0.20	0.65
Security	0.03	0.42	-0.07	0.24
Adventurous	0.20	0.44	0.42	0.40
Behavior	0.09	-0.36	0.07	-0.77
Masc/Fem	0.78	0.14	0.81	-0.24

Table 6. Group Centroids for the Two Discriminant Runs

Group	Female Viewers		Male Viewers	
	I	II	I	II
Female Stipulation	0.60	-0.25	0.26	0.05
Male Stipulation	-0.56	-0.03	-0.43	0.29
Herm. Stipulation	-0.04	-0.26	0.05	-0.33

Figure 2. Location of Descriptive Variables and Centroids in the Discriminant Space





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